

Media, PA—Congressman Sestak met today with James S. Dillon, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance of Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE); Dr. Jim Moran, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs (PASSHE); Lacy R. Wheeler III, Attorney at Law; Gaynelle Turner Lewis, Board of Directors, Cheyney University; Dr. Peter H. Garland, Executive Vice Chancellor (PASSHE); Dr. John C. Cavanaugh, Chancellor (PASSHE); Sylvia F. Washington, Board of Directors, Cheyney University; Steven P. Anderson, Alumni; Fawaaz Fields, Cheyney University Class of '10; Paul Turner, Alumni; and Sulayman Clark, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Cheyney University; Dr. Joan Duvall-Flynn, President of the Media NAACP Chapter; and Cheyney President Dr. Michelle Howard-Vital.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the July 2007 action by students from Cheyney University to file an official complaint with the NAACP alleging that their civil rights were being violated, as the conditions of their dorms grew progressively worse due to a lack of funding. Congressman Sestak held today's meeting at the request of Dr. Joan Duvall-Flynn, who in addition to leading the Media chapter of Media NAACP, is also Chair of the NAACP's Pennsylvania Education Committee. Dr. Flynn's interest is to improve the quality of student life, to find out who is accountable for the current situation, and to decide how this issue will be addressed.

Since assuming office Congressman Sestak has been a strong supporter of all of the schools in the 7th Congressional District. At Cheyney he worked hard to facilitate collaborative projects between the university and community leaders, and will continue to work with the members of the Cheyney community through this situation. In January of 2008, Congressman Sestak presented Cheyney University with a check for \$1.25 million for their Science and Technology Complex. These federal funds will be used to improve their infrastructure as well as the capacity of the institution to better prepare underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines. Improvements to the science facility will directly impact students and faculty at Cheyney by enhancing the research and teaching capacity of the school.

In the course of today's two hour discussion there was general agreement that the University's financial energies in the past two decades have not always been clear and transparent. However, it was also noted that President Howard-Vital and her administration are working hard to improve the school's financial management and strategic planning so that the school will be qualified for increased support from the state of Pennsylvania, benefactors and alumni.

The Chancellor's office's main concern is to get new funds available to the University to replace or renovate the buildings. It has been echoed among those interested in obtaining funds for construction from the Economic Stimulus Bill that projects that are "shovel-ready" will be a priority, and Cheyney was viewed as among the most shovel-ready and "teed-up" for renovation.

The principal and pressing need is to refurbish the university's residence halls which have been the source of frustration to students and administration alike. The oldest building on campus, Humphreys Hall is currently unused due to structural danger. "Cheyney University, the oldest historically black university in America, has a long history of advancing educational opportunity and academic achievement," said Congressman Sestak "I am distressed to know of its \$100 million dollar deferred maintenance account and the reports of deplorable living conditions. I am prepared to support efforts through state federal and private sources to secure funds necessary to restore this university to greatness."

The two hour meeting included review of opportunities for Cheyney and other Pennsylvania state colleges to participate in the economic stimulus program, the current process for updating the school's Master Capital Plan, and the need to address the school's current deficit which is approaching \$5 million. "I am proud of Cheyney's legacy and pleased that there is action to resolve the material weaknesses of the past. Our collective goal must be to restore public and alumni confidence in the university. I appreciate the interest shown in this problem by Chancellor Cavanaugh, D. Flynn, Dr Howard-Vital, Cheney's alumni and student body. This is a very strong, capable and determined team and together we will prevail," concluded Sestak.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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